

**The Relation of High School Academic Performance
and Student Effort to Language Use and Recency of Migration
Among Asian- and Pacific-Americans**

by

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INTRODUCTION:

This research report focuses on Asian- and Pacific-American adolescent high school achievement. It is part of a continuing collaborative effort between Stanford researchers and six high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. This Study of Families and Schools, as part of the larger Study of Stanford and the Schools, is primarily concerned with studying the impact of family structures and processes on the social and academic performance of American high school students.

During the Spring of 1985, we collected questionnaire data from almost all students in the six participating high schools, ending up with detailed information on 7,836 students. These data contained information on 1,281 Asians and Pacific Islanders. In 1986, a short follow-up survey was given to 8,000 high school students, more than half of whom participated in the 1985 survey. This follow-up provided more detailed data on family structure, immigration, and language use. Of the students responding to the follow-up questionnaire, 611 high school students reported speaking an Asian or Pacific language in the home. These languages include Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese (Indochinese), and Tongan and Samoan (Pacific Island). Distribution of these students is displayed in Table I.

In our analyses, we are primarily concerned with those 611 students who completed the follow-up questionnaire, comparing the academic performance of the productive bilingual students to those Asian students who report speaking only English at home, and to those whose parents do not speak an Asian or Pacific language. We also compare these bilingual students to those students who report speaking only an Asian language in the home. Furthermore, we are concerned with ways that recency of migration and generational differences affect the Asian- and Pacific-American student's academic performance, effort, and self-esteem.

RELATED LITERATURE:

The 1980 Census shows that the Asian/Pacific American community is composed of three and one half million individuals, and continues to grow at a rapid rate. During the 1970-80 decade, the Asian/Pacific American population increased by 128% (Tsuchida, 1982).

By the middle 1970's, more than one-third of all legal immigrants to the United States, almost 150,000 per year, were arriving from Asia (Wong & Hirschman 1983:381). Occupationally, among Asians, immigrants are about twice as likely to be professional and technical workers as are other immigrant groups. However, as large-scale immigration from Asia continues, occupational status is becoming more diverse with increasing sales, clerical, and blue collar workers. Furthermore, a family-chain pattern of migration is reported to be developing, with an increase in the percentage of dependent children and dependent adults immigrating to the United States (Wong & Hirschman 1983:399).

Researchers in Asian-American ethnic issues (Fong 1965, Tagaki 1973, Sue 1973; 1975, Suzuki 1977:151, Mason 1982) have stated that Japanese and Chinese Americans in the past have been pressured into believing in an American assimilation model and in illusions of the melting pot (Yamamoto 1968:143). However, concerns with a positive sense of ethnic identity seem to permeate the current Asian-American experience (Chun 1980:9). Structural assimilation of ethnic groups into an American melting pot is widely recognized not to have occurred, and recent literature (Mithun 1983:209) suggests that older, as well as newly, immigrating ethnic groups serve as vehicles for communal solidarity.

One factor in the maintenance of cultural cohesiveness, as well as in adaptation through an acculturation process, can be found in the role of the family (Mason 1982, Mithun 1983). In fact, "as an agent of primary socialization, the family is the conduit, the shaper of the roles its members play in society, the arbiter of morality, and the maker of values, beliefs, and attitudes that determine how individuals behave in their social interactions (Mithun 1983:213)". Further, parenting styles, being culturally variant, play an important role in the socialization process of adolescents (Tang 1976). Chinese traditional family structure "...tended toward a patriarchal, patrilineal extended family...which was characterized by mutual dependency with the family, continuity, respect for authority, and self-sufficiency (Mithun 1983:215)." In a comparison of five ethnic groups in cultural assimilation of mainstream values by ethnic families, Mithun found that the Chinese responded with high agreement to the importance of parental authority in family processes, where Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans responded only with some, or little, agreement (1983:213). Related to issues dealing with the family among Asian and Pacific ethnic groups in the United States is the role of variant language use in the home. Current research in the roles that languages play in ethnic identification and acculturation (Fishman 1985) suggests that productive bi- and multi-lingualism has been strongly associated with ethnic identity maintenance (Fishman 1985a, 1985b). Among Asian-Americans, the Chinese as well as Japanese have a history of productive bilingual language use in the home (Daniels 1971:146, Peterson 1978, Tang 1982).

Another factor that has warranted attention in research on the acculturation processes of Asian ethnic groups is the role of recency of migration, and differences in generations and waves of migration. Generational behavioral differences have been markedly noted among Asian-American immigrants, especially among the Japanese Issei, Nisei, and Sansei (Lyman 1971, Endo 1974, Gee 1982, O'Brien and Fugita 1983), the Chinese (Weiss 1973, Peterson 1978), Filipinos (Rabaya 1971, Cordova 1973, Wagner 1973, Okamura 1983), and Koreans (Shin 1971). This research suggests that generational differences in group identification play an important role in attitudes toward continuity and adjustment in Asian-American acculturation processes.

One aspect of generational difference lies in the conception of Asian-Americans as the 'successful model minority' (Hutchinson 1966, Yamamoto 1968, Okimoto 1971, Suzuki 1977, Wong 1977, Chun 1980). For example, Kitano 1969 (1976) and Peterson (1978) present the successful progress of Japanese Americans in terms of their high income and high education levels. This Asian-American

success stereotype has recently come under criticism (Endo 1974, Chun 1980) and, especially among Asian-American adolescents, this stereotype may be considered to have negative educational ramifications (Chun 1980).

When considering the Asian- and Pacific-American adolescent, current research points to the necessity of sensitively addressing and investigating the relations between home and school that more accurately reflect what is responsible for successes and failures in the American secondary school system. Differences among the various Asian and Pacific ethnic groups, as well as shared features, must be considered. In an attempt to begin to understand specific Asian- and Pacific-American ethnic group differences and similarities and their impact on the academic performance of the adolescent, the following paper focuses on the relation of high school academic performance and student effort engagement to variant language use and recency of migration.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS:

Combined Asian- and Pacific-American Analyses:

One of our major concerns in the Study of Families and Schools was a consideration of the differences among ethnic groups in academic achievement. As part of this concern, we began to look at differences in student mean effort engagement, mean self-esteem, mean self-reported grades, and reported authoritarian parenting style in the first through third generation of the combined Asian-American student sample. Generations were separated using information on student and parent nativity (See Appendix II, #11). We found that overall, among Asian-Americans, approximately 215 students reported being first generation (student and at least one parent foreign-born), approximately 110 students reported being second generation (student born in the U.S., at least one parent foreign-born), and approximately 95 students reported being third generation (both student and parent born in the U.S.) Among Pacific-American students, approximately 35 reported being first generation, 20 reported being second generation, and 20 reported being third generation.

Effort: Effort engagement was defined by a Guttman scale (0-4) involving a combination score for mean homework time, paying attention in class, mind wandering in class, and cutting class. These measures were taken from information provided by students completing the 1985 questionnaire (See Appendix I), with the lower the score, the higher the effort engagement. We found that students who report being first generation Asian-Americans engage in the greatest amount of academic effort (.434), and that third generation Asians engage in the least amount of effort (.581) in high school, among all Asian-Americans in our student sample (see Table II-A). Therefore, effort engagement appears to be decreasing with generation overall among Asians. A very different pattern is developing among Pacific-American students, with first generation students engaging in the lowest amount of effort (.806), and third generation students engaging in the greatest amount of effort (.429). There appears to be a consistent and sharp increase in effort from first through third Pacific-American students in our sample (See Table III-F). It should be noted that we recognize generational

Table I

**Distribution of Specific Asian Ethnic Groups and Pacific Islanders
by First Student Survey and Follow-up Survey**

	Chinese	Japanese	Korean	Unspecified Asian	Indochinese (Vietnamese)	Filipino	Pacific Island
(1985 Survey:)							
Not in Follow-up	117	54	41	105	96	166	91
(1985 & 1986 Survey:)							
In Follow-up	148	57	53	72	77	130	104
Total	265	111	94	177	173	296	165

characteristics may be variant due to the differing characteristics of migration waves. Our third generation Asian sample may be different from our first generation sample not only in factors involved with recency of migration, but also because they may be a very different group of individuals who immigrated for very different social, political, and personal reasons.

Self-Esteem: A self-esteem score was calculated using the Rosenberg self-concept scale. Among the overall Asian student population, mean self-esteem is greatest among second generation Asians (2.09), and lowest among first generation Asians (2.55) (Table II-A), again with a lower score designating a higher level of self-esteem. Among Pacific-American students, self-esteem rises consistently over generation, with third generation having the greatest self-esteem mean score (Table III-F).

Self-reported Grades: Self-reported grades were computed on a scale from 1-4, with the highest score representing the highest grade. These grades were based on information reported by students from the 1985 questionnaire (Appendix I, #16). Among the overall Asian student sample, mean grades remain the same, consistently high, over the three generations and range from 3.31 (third generation) to 3.37 (first generation). Again, there is a slight tendency for grades to decrease from first to third generation but the difference is not considered significant. Pacific-American students again report an increase in grades over generation, starting much lower in first generation (2.44 compared to Asian 3.31) and rising in the second (2.92) and third generations (3.03). It should be noted that although the Pacific-Americans tend to increase grades over generation, they start lower than Asian-Americans and even in their highest third generation, show lower grades, overall, than Asian-Americans (Table III-F).

Parenting Styles: When looking at parental relations with students, among our overall groups, we summarized the general approach of parents to their adolescents in terms of parenting style. Diana Baumrind (1971) developed a typology of parenting styles which we have modified to fit our questionnaire data. These parenting styles are defined as Authoritarian, Permissive, and Authoritative. Authoritarian parents attempt to shape, control, and evaluate the behaviors and attitudes of their children in accord with an absolute set of standards. These parents emphasize obedience, respect for authority, work, tradition, and the preservation of order. Permissive parents, in contrast, are tolerant and accepting of the child's impulses, use as little punishment as possible, make few demands for mature behavior, and allow considerable self-regulation by the child. Authoritative parenting includes expectation of mature behavior from the child and clear setting of standards by the parents, firm enforcement of rules and standards but encouragement of the child's independence and individuality, and open communication between parents and children.

Parenting style, as measured by our reformulation of the Baumrind typology, seems to affect high school grades. For the general high school student population, both authoritarian and permissive parenting are associated with lower grades. Authoritative parenting, on the other hand, is associated with higher grades (Dornbusch, et al, 1987; Dornbusch, in process). However, among our Asian- and Pacific-American student sample, we have found some interesting generational variation. Among first

Table II

**Mean Scores for Combined Asian Groups by Generation
and Language Use in the Home**

	Effort Engagement		Self-Esteem		Self-Reported Grades		Authoritarian Parenting Style	
	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)
A. Generation:								
1st Generation Asians	.434 (.46)	208	2.55 (1.36)	170	3.37 (.67)	208	3.49 (.61)	211
2nd Generation Asians	.481 (.42)	103	2.09 ^d (1.41)	99	3.32 (.70)	104	3.46 (.58)	105
3rd Generation Asians	.581 (.41)	89	2.33 (1.35)	86	3.31 (.64)	91	3.37 (.59)	67
B. Language Use in the Home:								
Asian Language Only:	.426 (.41)	93	2.91 (1.54)	75	3.43 (.67)	93	3.57 (.60)	98
English and Asian Language:	.351 (.46)	91	2.18 (1.22)	83	3.52 (.57)	92	3.40 (.56)	93
English Only:	.556 (.42)	185	2.25 (1.36)	169	3.25 (.71)	182	3.41 (.59)	183

Table III

**Mean Scores for Specific Asian Ethnic Groups and Pacific Islanders
by Generation**

A. Chinese:

	Effort Engagement		Self-Esteem		Self-Reported Grades		Authoritarian Parenting Style	
	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)
1st Generation	.410	82	2.53	77	3.45	82	3.42	86
2nd Generation	.420	44	2.00	41	3.45	44	3.42	44
3rd Generation	.594	23	2.05	21	3.39	23	3.26	23

B. Japanese:

1st Generation	.583	13	2.40	10	3.32	14	3.36	16
2nd Generation	.532	23	2.27	22	3.42	24	3.36	24
3rd Generation	.462	26	2.35	26	3.52	27	3.23	27

C. Korean:

1st Generation	.502	36	2.79	29	3.39	35	3.68	33
2nd Generation	.625	14	2.67	12	3.39	14	3.67	14

(No 3rd generation data.)

D. Vietnamese:

1st Generation	.350	66	2.49	66	3.44	66	3.61	66
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(No 2nd or 3rd generation data.)

E. Filipino:

1st Generation	.573	63	2.48	58	3.14	65	3.52	64
2nd Generation	.734	51	2.15	41	2.83	50	3.44	50

(No 3rd Generation data.)

F. Pacific Islander:

1st Generation	.856	26	2.62	26	2.44	32	3.56	31
2nd Generation	.606	19	2.18	17	3.03	19	3.56	19
3rd Generation	.463	20	1.83	18	2.71	19	3.40	20

generation Asian-American high school students, the impact of authoritarian parenting is less negative. Authoritarian parenting is more associated with lower self-esteem and with more effort engagement in the third generation, but it is more strongly associated with lower grades and less effort engagement in the second generation in the overall Asian-American student sample (Table V-A).

Furthermore, authoritarian parenting style appears to decrease over generation, overall, among Asian-Americans, from 3.49 to 3.37 (Table II-A). Among the Pacific-American population, Authoritarian parenting style also decreases with generation, being highest in the first and second generations (3.56) and decreasing in the third generation (3.40) (Table III-F). It is interesting that among the Pacific-American population, Authoritarian parenting style is higher, across all generations, than among the combined Asian-Americans. This may point to a higher degree of Authoritarian parenting among Pacific-Americans across generations, having an effect on the acculturation process of the Pacific-American high school student.

Generation and Specific Asian Ethnic Groups:

We looked at the effort engagement, self-esteem, self-reported grades, and authoritarian parenting style measures of specific Asian-American ethnic groups. These included Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino. We did not, however, break our Pacific-American sample into separate ethnic groups due to the very low numbers in each Pacific group.

When considering the separate Asian-American ethnic groups, we found that, among the Chinese, mean effort engagement and authoritarian parenting style decrease over generation, mean self-esteem increases across generation, and self-reported grades remain the same across generation (Table III-A). Furthermore, mean number of hours per week spent on homework tends to remain the same across generation (Table VII). Authoritarian parenting style is significantly associated with lower grades ($-.362, p < .05$) in the second generation, and somewhat associated with lower grades in the third generation (Table VI).

Among the Japanese, mean effort, self-esteem, and self-reported grades increase across generation, but authoritarian parenting style, as among the Chinese sample, decreases across generation (Table III-B). Mean number of hours per week spent on homework tends to increase across generations (Table VII) among Japanese-American students. Authoritarian parenting style tends to be associated with lower grades in the first generation ($-.20, ns$), and second generation ($-.249, ns$) among Japanese-Americans (Table VI).

No student reported being a third generation Korean, so we are limited to first and second generation data among Koreans. We found, however, that Koreans decrease mean effort and increase self-esteem across generation. Self-reported grades and authoritarian parenting style remain the same from first to second generation (Table III-C). We have no data for second and third generation Vietnamese students, so generational comparisons cannot at this point be made for the Vietnamese-American ethnic group (Table III-D). However, it should be stated that the first generation

Table IV

**Mean Scores for Specific Asian Ethnic Groups and Pacific Islanders
by Language Use in the Home**

	Effort Engagement		Self-Esteem		Self-Reported Grades		Authoritarian Parenting Style	
	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)
A. Chinese:								
Asian Language Only:	.525	37	2.79	37	3.28	37	3.55	39
English and Asian Language:	.357	56	2.19	53	3.60	56	3.32	58
English only:	.377	42	2.08	39	3.43	42	3.41	42
B. Japanese:								
Asian Language Only:	(.323	8)	(3.33	6)	(3.50	9)	3.18	10
English and Asian Language:	.600	10	1.90	10	3.41	11	3.27	11
English Only:	.567	35	2.44	35	3.43	35	3.36	35
C. Korean:								
Asian Language Only:	.488	20	3.00	15	3.58	19	3.70	18
English and Asian Language:	.358	10	(2.00	8)	3.60	10	3.72	10
English Only:	.625	20	2.89	19	3.20	20	3.61	19

D. Vietnamese:

Asian Language Only:	.338	35	2.75	24	3.43	35	3.64	37
English and Asian Language:	(.254	8)	2.21	14	3.41	17	3.70	17
English Only:	.567	15	1.92	12	3.10	15	3.50	15

E. Filipino:

Asian Language Only:	(.667	4	(2.00	3)	(2.60	5)	(3.50	4)
English and Asian Language:	.612	35	2.82	33	3.11	33	3.51	35
English Only:	.656	82	2.11	70	2.96	84	3.47	82

F. Pacific Islander:

Pacific Language Only:	(1.230	7)	(2.00	3)	(2.29	7)	(3.82	7)
English and Pacific Language:	.625	10	2.10	10	2.71	12	3.62	12
English Only:	.634	41	2.16	38	2.70	42	3.48	41

Table V

**Correlation of Authoritarian Parenting Style and Effort, Self-Esteem,
and Self-Reported Grades by Generation and Language Use in the Home**

	Authoritarian with Effort Engagement		Authoritarian with Self-Esteem		Authoritarian with Self-Reported Grades	
A. Generation	r	N	r	N	r	N
1st Generation Asians	.015	201	.117	170	-.056	200
2nd Generation Asians	.128	103	.069	99	-.378***	104
3rd Generation Asians	-.144	89	.267*	86	-.056	91
B. Language Use in the Home:	r	N	r	N	r	N
Asian Language Only:	-.072	89	.048	75	-.038	90
English and Asian Language:	-.143	90	.141	83	-.046	91
English Only:	.129	183	.164*	169	-.223**	180

* indicates $p < .05$
 ** indicates $p < .01$
 *** indicates $p < .001$

Table VI

**Correlation of Authoritarian Parenting Style and Self-Reported Grades
by Generation for Specific Asian Ethnic Groups and Pacific Islanders**

	Authoritarian by Self-Reported Grades	(N)
A. Chinese:		
1st Generation	.09	80
2nd Generation	-.362*	44
3rd Generation	-.027	23
B. Japanese:		
1st Generation	-.20	14
2nd Generation	-.249	24
3rd Generation	.120	27
C. Filipino:		
1st Generation	-.156	63
2nd Generation	-.267	48
3rd Generation	.789*	8
D. Pacific Islanders:		
1st Generation	-.122	36
2nd Generation	-.209	18
3rd Generation	.405	13

* indicates $p < .05$

Vietnamese reported the greatest mean number of hours per week spent on homework of all the Asian- American ethnic groups (Table VII).

Filipino-Americans exhibit interesting differences from the other Asian-American ethnic groups. Although we have no third generation data, we find that mean effort engagement and grades sharply decrease from the first to second generation (Table III-E). Self-esteem increases, but authoritarian parenting style remains the same. The Filipino-Americans are most different from other Asian-American ethnic groups in that self-reported grades not only decrease, but sharply decrease over generation, instead of remaining relatively constant as they do among the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean-American student samples. Filipino-American students also report a decreasing mean number of hours per week spent on homework from first to second generation (3.78 to 3.41) (Table VII).

The Pacific-American students are increasing in the areas of effort engagement and self-esteem across generation. However, self-reported grades are seen to fluctuate, being highest among second generation Pacific-Americans, and authoritarian parenting decreases across generation. Pacific-American students report the lowest mean number of hours per week spent on homework of all the Asian/Pacific ethnic groups (3.33 second generation), and mean homework hours tends to fluctuate across generation (Table VII).

By looking at these individual ethnic groups, we note how important it is to look at the differences as well as similarities exhibited by the Asian-American and Pacific-American students in academic effort engagement, self-esteem, grades, as well as in reported parenting style in the home. We see that, in these categories, Pacific-Americans and Filipinos differ markedly from the other Asian-American groups. In academic performance, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and (first generation) Vietnamese start with high grades, and maintain these over generations. Filipino-American students start high but markedly decrease in self-reported academic performance. Pacific-Americans, on the other hand, start with the lowest grades of any ethnic group compared here, increase self-reported grades over generation, but still retain overall lower grades relative to other groups in this sample.

In mean academic effort engagement, Chinese, Koreans, and Filipino-Americans report decreasing effort over generation and Japanese-Americans report increasing effort. Pacific-Americans report the lowest level of effort engagement in the first generation, but increase effort the greatest of any group in this sample across generations.

Finally, with respect to parenting style, the impact of authoritarian parenting is less negative in the first generation among the overall Asian-American student sample, and is more associated with lower self-esteem in the third generation, but more strongly associated with lower grades and less effort engagement in the second generation of Asian-American students.

Language Use Among Asian- and Pacific-Americans:

When examining the impact of variant language use on effort engagement, self-esteem, and self-

Table VII

**Mean Number of Hours Per Week Spent on Homework
by Asian and Pacific Island Ethnic Group and Generation**

	Chinese:	Japanese:	Vietnamese:	Filipino:	Pacific Island
1st Generation	3.97	3.72	4.34	3.78	3.56
2nd Generation	4.06	4.28	----	3.41	3.33
3rd Generation	3.98	4.09	----	----	3.73

reported grades, we found that use of *both* English and an Asian language was associated with the highest level of effort engagement (.351), the highest self-esteem (.218), and the highest grades (3.52) among the combined Asian ethnic groups (Table II-B). Use of English only in the home was associated with the lowest degree of effort engagement (.556) and the lowest grades (3.25). Among the Pacific-Americans, use of *both* English and a Pacific language was also associated with the highest level of effort and the highest grades. Using a Pacific language only in the home was associated with the lowest effort and the lowest grades (Table IV-E).

Further, when examining variant language use among specific Asian- and Pacific-American ethnic groups, we found that among each group except the Japanese-American students, use of both English and an Asian language was associated with the highest level of effort engagement and the highest grades (Table IV-F). However, among the Vietnamese, speaking an Asian language only in the home was associated with the highest grades, with both languages a close second.

When looking at self-esteem associated with variant language use, we found that among the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino-Americans, self-esteem was highest when only English was spoken in the home. Among the Japanese, Korean, and Pacific-American students, self-esteem was highest when both English and an Asian (Pacific) language were spoken in the home (Table VI).

This tends to suggest that productive bilingualism may aid academic effort engagement and academic success among Asian- and Pacific- American high school students. Furthermore, self-esteem was highest among three of the Asian and Pacific ethnic groups when both English and an Asian (Pacific) language were spoken in the home.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION:

To summarize, our results point to three generalizations:

1. Asian-Americans and Pacific-Americans exhibit very different patterns in school acculturation processes. This points to the need to treat these groups as distinct when looking at issues of ethnicity and school achievement.

2. The impact of authoritarian parenting is less negative upon first generation high school students or students who only speak a non-English language in the home.

3. Use of both languages (English and Asian/Pacific Languages) in the home is associated with the highest level of effort and highest grades in high school among six out of our seven ethnic groups of Asian and Pacific-American students. Only our small sample of Japanese do not fit this pattern. This finding points to the importance of the consideration of continuity and adjustment in the familial and cultural experience of Asian and Pacific-American high school students.

To further, and more sensitively, investigate the issues raised in this report, our efforts in 1987-88 will include detailed qualitative study of ethnic, neighborhood, and school contexts. We will focus on the perceptions of students, parents, teachers, and school administrators concerning the

characteristics of specific Asian ethnic groups, family processes, language use, and changing patterns within the family, neighborhood, and school. Our ethnic analyses will include some of the newer migrant groups whose educational performance is of current interest. Further, we will look at quantitative and qualitative information about Vietnamese, Filipino, and Chinese migrants from Asia. We intend to study changes through time in student effort and academic performance for members of each group of migrants with careful analyses of the impact of language use by students and their families. These analyses will seek to determine whether shifts in the normative reference group can explain the changing patterns of effort and performance to which our current findings and analyses point.

Notes

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